United Nations A/C.2/53/SR.37

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
3 February 1999
English
Original: Spanish

Second Committee

Summary record of the 37th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 10 November 1998, at 3 p.m..

Chairman: Mr. Asadi ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)
later: Mr. Agona (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Uganda)

Contents

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

98-82246 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*) (A/53/3, A/53/173–E/1998/87 and A/53/406)

1. **Mr. Kamal** (Pakistan), speaking as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, reported on the activities of the Working Group, which had been established with the dual objective of helping both Member States and the United Nations system to benefit from the informatics revolution and ensuring that developing countries did not lag behind in the use of new technologies.

2. In the first phase of its work, the Working Group had, within existing resources, achieved impressive results in three areas: connectivity of all permanent missions with the United Nations databases, the progressive elimination of obstacles impeding access to the network and the implementation of training programmes. In the second phase of its work, it had set out to help improve the capacity of United Nations information systems through, *inter alia*, connectivity between the optical disk system and the Internet, the launching and updating of the Web pages of the United Nations and the permanent missions and the provision of electronic information services and of access to Listserv addresses.

3. Recently, the work of the Working Group had focused on, *inter alia*: Internet access for delegations in the United Nations Building (12 computers with Internet access had already been installed and the installation of another four was planned); videoconferencing services, both for use by Member States and the United Nations Secretariat, and for an outreach programme focusing on the main activities of the United Nations system with a view to providing information on the work of the Organization to academic institutions; the qualitative and quantitative improvement of the information contained in the United Nations and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) home pages, which would soon be accessible in the six official languages of the United Nations; the migration of electronic mail from UNDP to the United Nations in order to ensure the connectivity of all the permanent missions with the Organization's new server; and the electronic mailing to all the permanent missions of informatics newsletters on important subjects relating to the work of the Working Group.

4. With regard to the informatics problem anticipated in the year 2000, addressed in a General Assembly resolution pursuant to which the Council had prepared relevant guidelines to be followed by Member States, the Working Group had organized a national coordinator's conference on that topic, to be held in New York on 11 December 1998. Invitations had been sent to the permanent missions in New York and to various regional groupings. The Trust Fund of the World Bank would finance the participation of developing countries (one representative per country).

5. The Working Group had also organized three informatics symposia with a view to fostering cooperation among Member States, the Secretariat and the private sector in order to facilitate the developing countries' access to information and help them use information as a key factor in their development.

6. The Working Group had also considered an information management strategy, on which initial working papers prepared by the Information Technology Services Division, the European Union and the United States of America were already available. The papers proposed, *inter alia*, the appointment of a chief information officer who would be in charge of coordinating information management in the United Nations Secretariat. No decision had been taken as yet on the suggestion that the Secretary-General should establish a task force to carry out that function. A full report on the issue must be prepared for submission to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1999.

7. Within the framework of the technical cooperation programme, more than 1,000 surplus computers and printers and 30 computers donated by the Permanent Observer Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations had been distributed to the permanent missions of developing countries. Another 50 had been donated by UNDP, which had initially offered to provide between 300 and 500 computers.

8. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) said that new ways of evaluating the Council's work must be found. Referring to activities carried out in 1998, he stressed the significance of the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the session on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, and the high-level segment of the substantive session in which the ministerial communiqué on market access had been adopted.

9. The session held in May had been particularly significant, since, for perhaps the first time, the Council had launched a genuine and serious dialogue with representatives of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). Although, for the time being, there were many more problems than solutions, it was important to promote a real

and transparent dialogue between the Council and ACC. As his delegation had indicated at the time, the Council itself should meet the same standards of efficiency it set for the coordination tasks of the Secretariat and facilitate interaction with the ACC subsidiary mechanism. The results of the high-level meetings had confirmed the idea of the President of the Council that it could address and contribute to resolving core economic questions without duplicating work carried out elsewhere.

10. In 1998, the Council had been able to fulfil a mandate that had been considered virtually impossible, that of implementing General Assembly resolution 50/227. His delegation expected that the work would continue on the basis of Council resolution 1998/46. Another vital aspect of the Council's work had been the holding of the humanitarian affairs segment, whose agreed conclusions called for, *inter alia*, an expansion of the Council's coordination mandate.

11. His delegation believed that the coordination function of the operational activities segment continued to duplicate the work of the General Assembly to some extent. In that connection, it hoped that the draft resolution on the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities, which was being discussed in the Second Committee, would recognize the need for a clearer delineation of the Assembly's and the Council's respective responsibilities.

12. His delegation believed that the general segment still left much room for improvement and that, in particular, the task of rationalizing the Council's agenda must be continued and accorded priority in inter-sessional consultations. The reduction of the length of the substantive sessions from five to four weeks had mainly affected the general segment. Even greater improvements must be made in the preparation of the substantive sessions. He recalled that it was on his delegation's initiative that the Council had adopted resolution 1998/1 on the proclamation of international years. His delegation intended to introduce a draft resolution in the Second Committee on follow-up of the recommendation contained in that Council resolution.

13. With respect to the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/225 (A/53/173), his delegation supported the Secretary-General's conclusions and believed that the United Nations must play a vital role in the review of the question at the national, regional and international levels. His delegation supported, in particular, the proposal to carry out a more comprehensive and in-depth review in the year 2001 of the latest trends in the area of public information and development and, in that connection, referred to Council decision 1998/220.

14. Both his delegation and other members of the Group of Eastern European States believed that the allocation of seats on the Executive Board of the World Food Programme, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/8, was a matter of principle. Consistent with the principles laid down in General Assembly resolution 48/162, the Group of Eastern European States, which had constantly demonstrated its readiness to reach compromise solutions and take into account the concerns of other regional groups, hoped that all regional groups would show their good will and understanding with regard to the concerns of the Eastern European States.

15. **Ms. Bai Yongjie** (China) said that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/227, the Economic and Social Council had reviewed the functions and working method of its subsidiary bodies and had reached a broad consensus on the need to clarify the relationships and strengthen coordination between relevant bodies. The Council had made constructive recommendations for strengthening the role of the regional commissions, which was of great importance to the revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

16. During the current phase, the Council should concentrate on implementing the various agreed measures and consolidating the results achieved thus far. Many delegations had spoken of the need to take full advantage of the regional commissions, some of which had already carried out reforms and readjustments. During the past year, the regional economic commissions had participated to a greater extent in the work of the Council, making valuable contributions from their regional perspective. In that regard, she welcomed the decision to have the Deputy Secretary-General chair the coordination meetings in each region.

17. With the accelerated development of economic globalization and the continuous changes in international economic relations, the Council needed to keep abreast of the situation from an overall macroeconomic perspective. Her delegation was in favour of the Council's holding special meetings to engage in high-level dialogue with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank on major international economic issues and welcomed the Bank's proposal to invite certain members of the Council to discuss major issues. That would enhance the Council's role in solving international economic problems. In that connection, a dialogue on the current international and trade situation had been held during the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session for 1998, marking a new beginning in the Council's work. Her delegation hoped that the Council would strengthen its cooperation with the

relevant institutions in order to better fulfil its mandate under the Charter.

18. It was clear that in order for its work to be effective, the Council must clarify the responsibilities of the various functional commissions and the relationship between them. Another major activity undertaken by the Council in 1998 was a discussion of its role as coordinator for major economic and social issues in the United Nations system in the context of follow-up to the major world conferences of the 1990s.

19. That discussion, in which the main committees, regional commissions, funds and programmes and specialized agencies had all participated, had demonstrated that coordination was not only necessary but also feasible. In particular, the Council could play a substantive coordinating role in facilitating follow-up to the major world conferences. A key element of the consensus reached at that meeting concerned the need to encourage the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to increase its communication with Member States and intergovernmental institutions.

20. While giving full credit to the Council for its achievements in improving its work, her delegation considered that much remained to be done. A major failing was the Council's tendency to engage in a pro forma review of the reports submitted by its subsidiary bodies without in-depth analysis or substantive guidance. There was also potential for improvement in the organization of meetings. In recent sessions, failure to circulate important documents on time and in the languages required had made it difficult for some delegations to participate in the discussion of major agenda items and had hampered efforts to improve the Council's efficiency. She hoped that the Secretariat would give serious consideration to that problem and, under the supervision of the Bureau, submit proposals for its solution.

21. **Mr. Reshetnyak** (Ukraine) said that the Council had made considerable progress at its substantive session in implementing the reform proposals contained in General Assembly resolution 50/227 and those of the Secretary-General. The well-organized preparatory process, carried out well in advance, had made it possible for the Council to complete its work on schedule and to achieve substantial improvement in its methods of work. His delegation therefore considered that that practice should be further developed and continued in the future.

22. The high-level segment of the 1998 substantive session of the Council, in which the heads of the relevant United Nations agencies had participated, and the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions together with the General Assembly dialogue on globalization were the most encouraging examples of recent innovations in the spirit of the overall reform process in the United Nations system. His delegation welcomed the ministerial communiqué adopted at the high-level segment, which had addressed acute problems of market access in the context of the globalization and liberalization of the world economy in a comprehensive, concise manner. His delegation's only concern was that, because the communiqué had been drafted prior to the ministerial meeting, it did not reflect all the specific features of the discussions.

23. The review of the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system, which the Council had undertaken for the first time in 1998 in a humanitarian affairs segment, had been successful. His delegation believed that the most valuable contribution of the segment had been a recommendation calling for a comprehensive approach to countries in crisis, in which durable recovery, peace-building, human rights and sustainable development would be included (agreed conclusions 1998/1, para. 17).

24. The agenda of the general segment of the Council remained overloaded with questions of minor importance and should be further streamlined in order to increase the effectiveness of the segment and avoid duplication of the work of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. The improvement in the Council's work during the current year, including the development of closer working relations between their bureaux, could also be incorporated into the work of those Committees.

25. His delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/225 (A/53/173) and considered that the United Nations should continue to provide technical assistance and policy guidance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, particularly with regard to the establishment of regulatory frameworks and control mechanisms for the operation of the private sector. It also supported the recommendation that a more comprehensive, in-depth review of changes, trends and innovations in the field of public administration and development should be carried out in the year 2001. Such a review was especially important in view of the impact of the current global crisis and the need to identify the role of the public sector and of governance in that context.

26. Lastly, the distribution of seats on the Executive Board of the World Food Programme under General Assembly resolution 48/162, which stipulated that the Board should have four members from Eastern European States, remained a matter of concern; his delegation continued to maintain

that, as a matter of principle, the provisions of that resolution, which had been adopted by consensus, should be implemented in full as soon as possible.

27. *Mr. Agona (Uganda), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

28. **Ms. Simonová** (Czech Republic) welcomed the remarkable progress in the Council's articulation and provision of guidance to its subsidiary bodies during 1998, although there was a still a need to reduce their relative isolation from each other. Her delegation also looked forward to positive results from the reform measures undertaken to simplify the Council's structure and streamline its performance.

29. She welcomed the inclusion of a humanitarian affairs segment in the Council's 1998 agenda. Of particular importance were the initiatives dealing with integrated, multifaceted and systematic problems, such as those of the world economy, which made a global forum more necessary than ever. Her delegation supported the growing role of the Council as a global forum for multisectoral dialogue and believed that occasional events such as the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, held in April 1998, the high-level segment on market access, held in July 1998, and the Second Committee high-level dialogue on globalization were particularly valuable.

30. General Assembly resolution 50/225 stated that the rapid pace and interdependence of global developments and their implications for all countries had led to a need for improved efficiency and effective public institutions, administrative procedures and sound financial management. The Czech Republic was among those countries that had been reforming their legal frameworks as part of the rehabilitation of democracy and the transition to a market economy; since 1990, the Czech Government had been reducing its involvement in the production of goods and services while gradually minimizing the size of its public administration. It had also introduced elements compatible with international standards that were conducive to civil participation and good governance and had set the goal of harmonizing its national legal framework with that of the European Union within a few years. Those reforms had made it increasingly obvious the role of government was extremely important; for that reason, her Government was currently focusing on the establishment of appropriate regulatory frameworks and control mechanisms.

31. Her delegation particularly appreciated the activities and programmes of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which, together with the Greek Government, had organized a regional workshop on public administration for Central and Eastern Europe in Thessaloniki in 1997, as well as the assistance provided in the areas of governance, civil participation and formulation of development policies by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the analysis and expertise of the Economic Commission for Europe.

32. **Mr. Zarie Zare** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that during the current year the Council had been quite responsive to new developments at the international level and, in particular, to the financial crisis in East and South-East Asia. The Council had successfully become a forum for dialogue, in particular by convening the first special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, which had clearly demonstrated the ability of the United Nations system to consider the new multidimensional challenges and to seek comprehensive solutions. It had also marked the need for the Council, through its coordination responsibilities, to intensify efforts to prepare the United Nations to address in a comprehensive manner the new challenges and their consequences in the short term and to find solutions to their long-term implications.

33. The high-level segment on market access had been an important step towards consolidation of the role of the United Nations system in the establishment of an open, rule-based, equitable, non-discriminatory, fair and predictable multilateral trading system, and the ministerial communiqué adopted on that occasion had further underscored the Council's paramount coordinating role in that area. It was clear that the Council, in close cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), could make a valuable contribution to the further advancement of that system and thus to world economic progress.

34. Likewise, the high-level dialogue at the current session of the General Assembly on the theme of the social and economic impact of globalization and interdependence and their policy implications had clearly indicated the need to address that multidimensional phenomenon in a comprehensive manner through coordination and cooperation between all the relevant bodies of the United Nations system and had emphasized the importance of coordination between the Council and the General Assembly.

35. With regard to the coordination role of the Council in the United Nations system, he noted that the decision to hold in 1998 a special session on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits should be evaluated at a later date, bearing in mind all the relevant issues, in order to make the format of the session more comprehensive. Member States

had been given an opportunity to raise their concerns and discuss problems in the presence of the Chairpersons of the functional commissions, the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions, the Chairpersons of the executive boards of the funds and programmes and the heads of the ACC task forces; accordingly, in future discussion of that issue, more attention should be paid to cross-cutting issues such as poverty eradication, mobilization of new and additional resources and meeting the agreed targets for official development assistance. Active participation by Member States at the preparatory stages could facilitate that process.

36. His delegation considered that the agreed conclusions adopted by the Council at its humanitarian affairs segment provided the necessary guidelines which would allow the respective bodies of the United Nations system and Member States to increase their efficiency and impact in that area.

37. **Mr. Sychou** (Belarus) joined previous speakers in considering the work of the Council in 1998 a success, noting that for the first time in many years, the Council had gone beyond its ordinary activities and had made a contribution to solving global economic and social problems by organizing a special session on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, holding a meeting on global financial integration with the heads of IMF and the World Bank, adopting for the first time a ministerial communiqué on access to international markets at the conclusion of the high-level segment of its substantive session and, again for the first time, holding a humanitarian affairs segment which had concluded with the adoption of agreed conclusions on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian activities of the United Nations system. In particular, Council resolution 1998/46 contained a set of practical measures intended to reform and update the activities of bodies of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields.

38. Although the Council played a key role in strengthening the operational activities of the United Nations, the majority of operational funds and programmes faced increasing financial difficulties as a result of the decrease in financial resources from donors. The Council should promote the accumulation of additional financial resources for development activities and consider increasing the output of the measures taken by the funds and programmes and of the resources spent at the regional and country levels as one of its priority tasks; to that end, it should strengthen coordination between the various funds and programmes, revitalize its activities in the field and pay particular attention to consolidating the resident coordinator system.

39. As it would be necessary to continue to improve the interaction between the Council and its functional commissions during the coming year, his delegation considered that the joint meetings of the Bureau of the Council and the bureaux of its functional commissions should be used to discuss matters related to the coordination of activities, especially in light of Council resolution 1998/46 on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields.

40. The Council should devote special attention to the process of reform and renewal of the activities of the regional commissions. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the dialogue held during the special and substantive sessions of the Council with the participation of the Executive Secretaries of those commissions. Their participation in the formulation of large-scale regional projects, with the support of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, should make it possible to implement at the regional level the provisions of the final documents of the major international conferences on economic and social questions. Moreover, reform of the regional commissions should involve not only a reduction in their activities but also an improvement in the quality of the services rendered to Member States and a more efficient utilization of financial resources.

41. His delegation supported those delegations which had proposed the regular organization of annual joint meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions in order to increase the coordination and complementarity of their activities and those of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. His delegation hoped that the Council would be able to adapt its activities to the requirements of the present and expressed its firm intention of making every effort, in cooperation with other Member States and Observer States, to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council in the activities of the United Nations system.

42. **Mr. Niculescu** (Romania) said that the work carried out by the Economic and Social Council in recent years had enhanced its vital role in forging a coherent and common vision on issues relating to the ongoing globalization process, in a spirit of partnership and with the participation of governments, international organizations and non-governmental actors.

43. Among the events which had taken place in 1998, he highlighted the special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and the first day of the

high-level segment, which had served to confirm Member States' interest in the Council's role as a forum for debating their countries' priorities, challenges posed by globalization and modalities of enhancing international cooperation. The invitation extended by the President of the World Bank to Council members to exchange views on cooperation between the World Bank and the United Nations system further confirmed the will of all parties to continue such a dialogue.

44. The laudable initiative of convening a special session on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits should be continued on an annual basis; debates should focus on themes agreed in the substantive session, taking into account the need to balance action and experience at the national level with the results and requirements of international cooperation.

45. During the operational activities segment, the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes had had an opportunity to present their observations and conclusions, and to make suggestions on increasing the effectiveness of their activities at the country level. In addition, the participation of country teams had introduced new elements of country coordination, based on countries' specificity and input received from the headquarters. The Council's coordination function could be strengthened through discussions on the support provided by the funds and programmes for the implementation of programmes of action adopted at the major United Nations conferences, with special emphasis on action at the national and regional levels.

46. The humanitarian affairs segment had been successful in identifying the dimension of the problem, the importance of coordinating United Nations activities in that field and the difficulties which had arisen in carrying out humanitarian activities. It should thus be continued on an annual basis.

47. Given that the globalization process had boosted regional cooperation and, in view of the ever-increasing importance of the implementation at the regional level of the programmes of action adopted by the major United Nations conferences, the Council should continue to consider the activities carried out at the regional level with the participation of all the United Nations regional commissions.

48. In the coming years, the Council would have to do its utmost to view the general segment in a new light. Taking into account the importance acquired by the sessions of the functional commissions in recent years, the Council should address that new reality constructively when deciding the content and purpose of agenda items for the general segment. A better division of work between the Council and the General Assembly was equally important; the themes agreed for the Council's segments should not be repeated in the same year in the debates of the General Assembly. The Council could fulfil the role assigned to it by the Charter of the United Nations only if there was general confidence in the outcome of its segments and a willingness to follow up its decisions and agreed conclusions. Lastly, the Council could report annually on the progress achieved in the dialogue opened with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the basis of an ongoing exchange of information with those institutions.

49. **Mr. Lai Xuan Chieu** (Viet Nam) praised the work carried out by the Council in 1998 despite the time and resource constraints attributable to the United Nations reform process. Among its achievements, he highlighted the unprecedented special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the meeting of the heads of various functional commissions and the inclusion of a humanitarian affairs segment in its substantive session. Successes had also been scored in the areas of sustainable development and international economic cooperation, as indicated in the Ministerial communiqué of the high-level segment, which had stressed the importance of the application of all Uruguay Round agreements and had called on WTO members to take into account the specific interests of developing countries in future trade negotiations with a view to ensuring that all countries be efited from market access.

50. During the session of the Council on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, held in May 1998, the Council had proved that it was playing an important role in the guidance and oversight of its subsidiary bodies; it had identified, *inter alia*, poverty eradication as the overriding objective of its efforts and had recognized the need to address the problem of declining resources for the implementation of conferences.

51. The decline in official development assistance (ODA) also gave cause for concern. Operational activities for development enabled developing countries to build capacities and to advance and manage their own development processes more effectively. Regrettably, the dilemma currently facing international cooperation for development was that the United Nations need for resources for operational activities was growing but the availability of resources was diminishing. Although unflagging efforts were being made to mobilize additional resources, serious consideration should be given to the proposals regarding core resources, which would guarantee a predictable, solid and sustainable financial basis for United Nations

development programmes. Moreover, the Council should include in its recommendations the question of the decline in official development assistance and stress the importance of mobilizing additional resources for developing countries and of attaining the agreed ODA targets. In that connection, the measures taken by the United Nations to increase the effectiveness of development cooperation, including the establishment of a development account to be funded from reductions in United Nations administrative costs, were encouraging.

52. It had been proved that the role of governments was decisive in the successful implementation of development programmes. In order to be effective, United Nations programmes should be based on national plans and priorities and should be a mixture of technical assistance, material support and the transfer of funds and technology. The cooperation and coordination of governments and of all bodies of the United Nations system, as well as concerted and sustained action, were necessary in order to strengthen the work of the Council.

53. **Mr. Ravou-Akii** (Vanuatu) referred to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/39 of 30 July 1998, entitled "Status of the least developed countries". In that connection, he was pleased that the Committee for Development Planning had been renamed the Committee for Development Policy and that it would continue to be a subsidiary body of the Council. That Committee would continue to conduct the triennial review of the status of least developed countries, and would establish an Internet Web site to disseminate information on the outcome of its work.

54. He also welcomed the expansion of the areas of expertise of the Committee's 24 member experts, who would deal, in particular, with environmental protection issues. The change in the Committee's name should promote the establishment of direct dialogue between the 24 experts of the Committee and the authorities of countries whose status was under review for the purpose of determining whether they should be included in or excluded from the list of least developed countries.

55. **Mr. Šimonovič** (Croatia) said that the Council's work as a principal organ of the United Nations had gained in importance and that it should continue to be carried out in the framework of Chapter X of the Charter of the United Nations. In the current era of globalization, in which great benefits could be derived from a multilateral approach to economic and social concerns, the Council had comparative advantages. The central role of the functional commissions in the review of major conferences strengthened the Council's coordinating and follow-up dimension. The session on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits was an important component of the process of assessing progress and adjusting policy according to changing circumstances.

56. The selection of global financial integration and development as the theme of the Council's special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions had been very timely in view of the subsequent worsening of the situation and all that it entailed for development. The Council should continue to explore in depth issues relating to international cooperation and policy coherence and should make efforts to encourage their consideration at the multilateral level.

57. In the light of the current global economic and social climate, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/227 on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, the Council was in a good position to perform the following functions: (a) identification of areas within its mandate in the economic, social and related fields that required the particular attention of Member States; (b) coordination of the activities of its subsidiary bodies and functional commissions, as well as those of other institutions of the United Nations system that dealt with issues within its purview, with the goal of providing policy direction and advice to Member States; (c) promotion of an integrated approach to sectoral problems; and (d) provision of inputs for Member States and groups of Member States, such as countries with developing economies or economies in transition, on how to deal with the effects of globalization, through the provision of a forum for policy elaboration and international cooperation.

58. The inclusion of a humanitarian affairs segment in the 1998 session was consistent with the Council's coordinating role. On the issue of reform, he appreciated the steps taken to consolidate some of the functional commissions and to reduce their membership, as well as the cost-effective way in which those results had been achieved. Since economic interdependence would continue to be a factor that bound all States closer together in the economic and social fields, it was essential that the Council should have a clearly defined role within the United Nations system.

59. **Mr. Bertucci** (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that he appreciated the positive assessment that had emerged from the debate, as well as the interesting suggestions on how the Economic and Social Council's work could be further improved in the coming years. In a sense, the Secretariat served as the Organization's institutional memory, and care must be taken to transmit those

suggestions to the next Bureau of the Council for the purposes of its work the following year.

60. Several delegations had referred to ways of further strengthening the link between the work of the General Assembly and that of the Council and to the manner in which the Council's report was considered by the General Assembly. As witnessed in the last few days, some confusion had arisen as to whether the report should be submitted to the plenary or to the various Main Committees of the General Assembly and as to how the different aspects of the report should be considered.

61. One possibility would be to organize a meeting between the Bureau of the Second Committee and the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council at the beginning of the year to consider how the Council's work could be presented to the General Assembly in a more structured manner so as to improve the relationship between those two important organs.

62. The second issue raised had been that of the relations among the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the specialized agencies and the Economic and Social Council. In that regard, it should be mentioned that Member States were only one aspect of the Council's coordinating role; the other aspects concerned the specialized agencies, the functional commissions, the regional commissions and the funds and programmes. Although those bodies had greatly increased their participation in the Council's work in the last year and had given a very positive assessment of the Council's functioning, much remained to be done. For example, it might be desirable to hold special round-table discussions with the executive heads or to ensure that the reports of ACC were submitted to the Council along with some clear indication as to how the Council could respond to the work of ACC.

63. A third issue was the general segment of the Council's sessions. Most delegations and the Secretariat agreed that the programme of work should be better organized so as to focus more clearly on how the Council's functional commissions were working, whether there was any overlap between them and how their work could be improved or complemented. Only then could the Council provide them with appropriate guidance.

64. Lastly, he referred to the follow-up of the Council's decisions. Although that was an important function of the Secretariat, it was also a function of the Council's Bureau, together with the Bureaux of the functional commissions, the governing bodies of the funds and programmes and the organizations of the system. It was important to establish better and closer interaction among all those entities. The Secretariat would take all those aspects into account in its preparations for the coming year.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.